

**STATE ADMINISTERED
2015 MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY (YRBS)
AND YOUTH HEALTH SURVEY (YHS)
FACT SHEET**

HIGH SCHOOL

Why is the survey being done? How will the results be used?

The Massachusetts Departments of Elementary and Secondary Education and Public Health will use the MYRBS and MYHS results to (1) determine the extent to which adolescents practice health risk behaviors; (2) monitor how priority health-risk behaviors among high school students increase, decrease, or remain the same over time; (3) evaluate the impact of state and local efforts to reduce high-risk behaviors; (4) develop and redesign comprehensive health education programs and other strategies to help reduce risk behaviors; and (5) monitor progress of intensive projects in select districts and communities.

Are sensitive questions asked?

Some questions may be considered sensitive. Drug, alcohol and tobacco use, suicide, physical fighting, and weapon-carrying pose a threat to students' health and lives. Sexual intercourse and intravenous drug use are among the behaviors known to increase the risk of becoming infected with the AIDS virus. The only way to determine the extent to which adolescents are at risk is to ask questions about these behaviors. Questions are presented in a straightforward and careful manner in recognition that these are sensitive issues.

How were the schools selected?

Through a random computerized selection process, 79 schools were selected to participate statewide. Within these randomly selected schools, 9th through 12th grade classes will be randomly selected to participate in the survey. Beginning in 2015, there will also be a targeted YRBS effort in select districts (29 schools) based on funding received for intensive work around HIV and Chronic disease prevention.

Is student participation voluntary?

Yes. Students of selected classrooms will be informed that they can choose whether to complete the survey. Students do not need written parental permission to participate.

Must schools send parent notification about the survey?

Yes. Schools must notify parents of the survey and allow them to opt their child out of the survey. There are no repercussions against the school, student, or parent if a child does not participate in the survey.

Can parents request that their child not participate in the Massachusetts administered YRBS or YHS?

Yes. Parents can contact the local school in writing requesting that their child not participate in the survey.

How long will it take the students to fill out the questionnaire?

One class period is needed to complete the written questionnaire, which contains 99 multiple-choice questions on the YRBS and 100 on the YHS. There is no physical test or exam involved.

Will student participation be anonymous? Will student privacy be protected?

Yes. Survey administration procedures have been designed to protect student privacy and allow for anonymous participation. To the extent possible, specially trained staff from UMASS Boston Center for Survey Research will administer the survey and teachers are not involved directly. Students are also encouraged to use the cover sheet provided by the data collector to cover their responses as they complete the questionnaire. Furthermore, no personal identifiers are contained on the answer sheets completed by the students. Neither students' nor schools' names are ever used.

Will certain students be surveyed again to see how their behavior changes?

No. Each year that the survey is conducted, a new sample will be drawn. It will be impossible to track students who participate because no identifying information will be collected.

Will schools or students be identified in the results?

Results will not be reported at the district, school, class, or student level. Participating districts, schools, and students will not be identified.